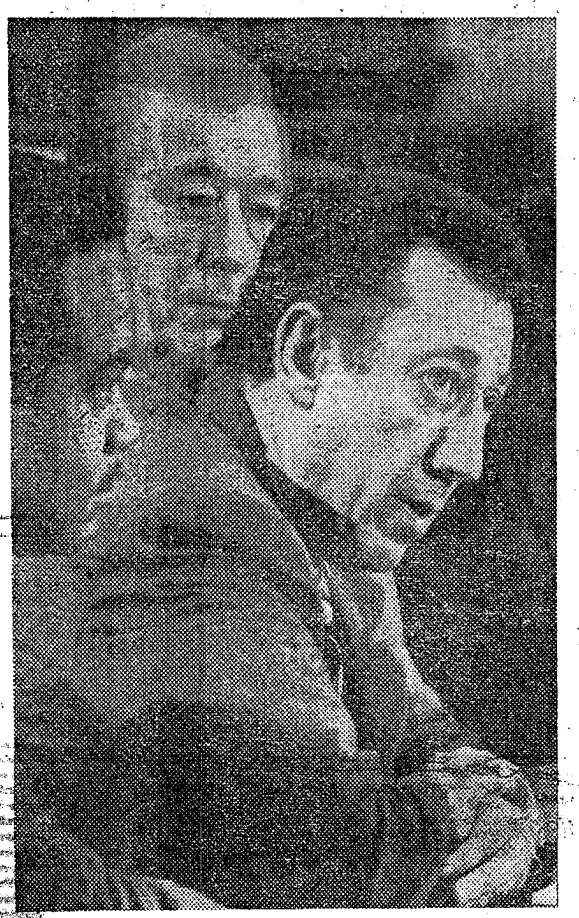
Full Inquiry Vowed on JFK, King



Associated Press

Richard Sprague answers reporters' questions after being sworn in as counsel in assassination inquiry. With him Del. Walter Fauntroy (D-D.C.) and Rep. Thomas Downing (D-Va.), House committee chairman.

By Mary Russell
Washington Post Staff Writer

Richard Sprague, sworn in yesterday as the acting counsel and director of the House select committee investigating the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr., promised that "no document" and "no witness" would be beyond the reach of his investigation into the murder of the two American leaders.

Sprague said the committee had given him virtually carte blanche to look into the Kennedy and King deaths.

House committee chairman Thomas Downing confirmed that the committee members would retain only the right to "veto" Sprague's actions, but would not interfere with his investigation and were giving him total control of hiring and firing staff.

Sprague, 51, built a reputation as a determined prosecutor when we served as assistant district attorney in Philadelphia from 1958 to 1974. He won convictions in more than 60 first degree murder cases, losing only one. He is best known for the conviction of United Mine Workers president W. A. (Tony) Boyle in the murder of Joseph Yablonski, a union opponent.

Sprague said yesterday he was asking immediately that a meeting be set up between himself and the heads of the Justice Department, the FBI and the CIA.

He said if the CIA or FBI attempted to withhold material, he hoped Congress would be asked to back up the committee with contempt citations and "then we could go to the courts."

Sprague emphasized that he was "entering the investigation with a completely open mind," and added, "I start assuming nothing. I start from ground zero."

He said he would attempt to find out who did the killings, what individuals were involved and whether "any individual or agency attempted to thwart" the investigations.

A Senate select intelligence committee report recently revealed that the Warren Commission was not told of attempts by the CIA to assassinate Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro. There have been other revelations that the FBI destroyed a note from Lee Harvey Oswald. In King's death, Frank C. Holloman, the Memphis police chief and a former FBI official, pulled off King's black security guard and transferred two firemen from a station across the street from where King was killed on the day of King's death.

Sprague said he would conduct the investigaions of the King and Kennedy deaths simultaneously. He refused to put a deadline on the investigations, saying he would have to go back to witnesses many times and it could take a "space of years."

The select committee, formed only a few weeks ago, dies at the end of the year and must be reconstituted at the beginning of the next Congress in January.

Rep. Henry Gonzelez (D-Tex) is expected to be the new committee chairman. Downing is retiring from Congress at the end of the year.

Sprague, who is now in the private practice of law, said he would be paid the top salary for a congressional staff person, about $38,000 or $39,000.

CBS, Moscow Sign Pact

MOSCOW, Oct. 7 (UPI)—CBS Inc. signed an agreement yesterday on cooperation with the Soviet State Committee for Television and Radio Broadcasting. The Tass news agency said the agreement provided for "exchange of television and radio materials and mutual assistance in preparing television and radio programs" on life in the Soviet Union and the United States. CBS also is competing for U.S. television rights to the 1980 Olympic games in the Soviet Union.